

**Rilke-Madrigale
for mixed choir a cappella**

after texts from the Duino Elegies

comissioned by the Deutscher Musikrat-

Duration: ca. 14'

I Die Nacht

II Denn das Schöne

III Jeder Engel

IV Einsam

V Steigendes Glück

Material: C. F. Peters Frankfurt

My first encounter with Rilke's work was some 30 years ago.

I was a student and had composed choral works for my fellow students.

Then at the beginning of the 80s I composed a string quartet with tenor solo, likewise from a poem by Rilke.

As a young composer one is sometimes rather plucky, impudent and/or naive approaching such texts. And this was the case for me with Rilke.

The older I became, the more my respect and my care over Rilke's highly musical poetry grew, and I even intentionally avoided setting his work to music.

Only now, after such a long time and setting texts of other poets of different styles and epochs, have I again enough courage to embark on new settings of Rilke's texts.

In between I have had very differing experiences with texts and lyrics, with the most differing writers, librettists and lyricists. Since the early 90s I have had a very close artistic relationship and friendship with the English writer David Bengree-Jones; we have realised several projects together and have plans for further work in the near future.

In Spring Hans-Joachim Lustig, the leader of the Lübeck chamber choir "I Vocalisti" asked me if I would write a composition for his choir.

Originally I thought about using Sufi texts; in March 2005 I had experienced a superb concert of Sufi music in New Delhi in India and afterwards had immersed myself intensely in such music.

However, for a variety of reasons I did not follow through with this intention, I met an artistic "blockade".

By coincidence a friend gave me a CD in 2005, the "Rilke Projekt" which also featured British Artists and this was the spark for me!

Suddenly I awoke in the night and it was clear to me not only that I wanted to set Rilke to music but also which Rilke: The Duino Elegies. I went immediately to the bookcase, took out "my" Rilke and began to read the Duino Elegies and to garner the first musical ideas.

In the following days, I examined the texts and began to make collages. From the start it was clear to me that I would seek to set the texts in fragments and not as a one-to-one translation of the metaphors into music. Over the years I had learnt to handle and to try out work in this way: for me texts were the key to my own musical world, to new atmospheres, to strange distant worlds.

Compositionally, through the techniques of composition, I have tried to reduce, to concentrate myself on the essence, far removed from the romantic choral literature of the nineteenth century. Naturally the influences are, on the one hand my own experiences which I have gathered over the past ten years during my various travels through India and South East Asia, and on the other hand my own exposure to European Early Music from the first half of the second millennium.

Modal Structures, feelings for root chords, ornament, the development of simple tonal relationships through common intervals; all this interested me as I composed these **Rilke-Madrigale**. I have discovered many similarities which were new to me between the Early Music before Bach and Indian and Arabic music. And that the religious and spiritual elements in the Duino Elegies (I have used exclusively fragments from the First and Tenth Elegies) have a significance for the development, the traces, the searching, the presentiments of sounds, tones, rhythms.

But this is difficult to analyse and to grasp in words-and perhaps it is as well it is so. A dissection, an analysing-to-death, a stultifying comparison of Rilke's texts and my ,musical language is neither possible nor desired.

Bernd Franke, 28.4. 2006